

Charles Alexander, Director of the Tennessee Small Business Development Center at Volunteer State
Community College

March's Newsletter:

Sell with a Story

I have a client that tells a simple story about her photography business. “Ava’s Photography” tells a story about a nervous mother bringing in her one-year old triplets for their first set of pictures. Getting all three of them to smile or interact at the same time is an amazing chore any time, especially in this case when one of them has a slight fever. With all three little boys in a bad mood, and crying Ava stepped into action. She was able to use her sock monkey puppet with her funny voices, and got on the floor and did some entertaining. In a very short period of time, she was able to get all of the little boys laughing and happy long enough to get photos in two different outfits. The mother was ecstatic and the photos made Facebook lore. What did we learn from this brief story? Ava has patience, provides good customer service, and has a special knack with toddlers. If Ava told you this story, you would remember it, and maybe even pass along her name to others. If she told you that she has great quality, reasonable prices, and is good with kids, you probably wouldn’t even remember her.

Some of the best salespeople I have encountered sell their products or services with a story. You can tell people all day long that you have 25 years of experience, but that usually falls on deaf ears. I have several years of experience in diet and exercise, but I am far and away not a fitness trainer. Tell a story (less than 3 minutes) about how your business has worked for a customer. Do not drown them with a 5 - 10 minute spiel about how many years of experience you have, that your business offerings can be all things to all people, and that you have top quality and service at the best price. This is what everyone tells consumers. First of all, it’s usually not entirely true, and it definitely does not let you stand out in a crowd.

Keep in mind, selling your products or services is NOT easy. The reality is that it is difficult to sell. The major reason most people are successful at sales is that they are willing to do things that **un**successful sellers are **un**willing to do. Just going through the motions with the same old FAB (features, advantages, and benefits) of your products or services in a half-hearted manner will not get it done. So fine tune your story and use social media, networking events, trade shows, and even knock on a few doors and tell it!

March

Government Contracting workshop of Volunteer State Community College's Tennessee Small Business Development Center, 2-4 p.m. Thursday, March 3, Betty Gibson Hall, Room 107C, of Vol State annex next to campus on Gap Blvd. in Gallatin. Registration is required. Reserve online. www.tsbdc.org. **Free.**

How to Start a Small Business workshop of Volunteer State Community College's Tennessee Small Business Development Center, 4-6 p.m. Tuesday, March 8, Betty Gibson Hall, Room 107C, of Vol State annex next to campus on Gap Blvd. in Gallatin. Registration is required. Reserve online. www.tsbdc.org. **Free.**

Small Business Sales Forum workshop of Volunteer State Community College's Tennessee Small Business Development Center, 3-5 p.m. Thursday, March 10, Thigpen Library in the Rochelle Center, Registration is required. Reserve online. www.tsbdc.org. **Free.**